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THE CHURCH,
A POEM.

1897
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THE CHURCH,

A POEM.

BY THE REV. JOHN SHARPE, B. A.

LATE SCHOLAR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD.

Quis novus hic nostris successit sedibus hospes,
Quem sese ore ferens?

VIRGIL.

What upstart bold by mere assurance made,
Dares the dread secrets of the Church invade?

LONDON:

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1797.



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TO

DANIEL SPURGEON, JUN. Esq.

SIR,

IN dedicating the following work to you I feel peculiar pleasure, as it enables me publickly to declare the great value and esteem I have ever entertained for you in private. This my first literary labour can be inscribed to no man with so much propriety as to that person whose friendship I have ever found steady and unabated, from my earliest infancy, to the present hour. To your inspection the

first rude outline of this poem was submitted some years since; by your advice, and approbation, it has been continued at intervals, as my avocations have permitted; and in its present perfect state, if it can with justice be so termed, I beg leave to inscribe it to you, as a mark of eternal regard from

Your sincere friend,

NINFIELD, SUSSEX,
Aug. 1st, 1797.

JOHN SHARPE.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE author of the following poem submits it to the inspection of the public, unmoved by those fears which generally fill writers on their first appearance with the gloomiest apprehensions.

It is the produce of those hours which have been unoccupied in the duties of his profession, and its fate can in no wise injure his peace or his reputation, as they are secured to him by the consciousness of rectitude, in holding up to observation some of those follies which have brought the clergy into disrepute.

It is presumed the subject is novel and unprecedented.—The defects of the poetry will be readily acknowledged. The author has varied the characters as much as possible, to relieve the weariness

which else attends the perusal of didactic composition. Like the painter, he has thrown many objects into shade, where a disgusting uniformity would appear, and has brought only those characters forward where light could be most happily disposed.— Some kind of machinery was necessary for the conduct of the poem through its several stages, and this he has borrowed from the most celebrated models of epic. With all its imperfections on its head, he commits his production to the impartial tribunal of the public.

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E R R A T U M.

Page 28, Line 6, for *soon*, read *so*.

THE CHURCH.

THE various arts which fail not to secure
 The gownisman's reputation, or advance
 His fame and fortune, to the chosen throng
 Who seek for wealth, or honour in the Church,
 I sing advent'rous: to the novel strain,
 Yet unattempted in poetic lay,
 Attend ye churchmen with punctilious care,
 And listen to the precepts, which disclose
 The hidden paths to dignity and ease.

Thou heavenly Muse, which on the highest top
 Of palace archiepiscopal dost sit,
 And watch preferment's gradual career,
 From simple curate to the mitred head,
 Inspire with winning art the mystic song,
 Explore each latent cause, each secret mode,

Each cautious step, and each compliance, meet
 To make the priest with benefice content,
 To raise him high in popular esteem,
 Or lift him titled to the house of peers.

To thee, I ween, the toilsome track is known
 Each rev'rend wight assumes, 'mid the wide field
 Of honours clerical, 'till won the meed,
 Gain or ambition decks in loveliest guise,
 And lures its eager vot'ry to pursue..
 From thy high pinnacle distinct is seen
 'The arduous race, where gown'd competitors
 For wealth, or glory, strive with anxious pains
 And diverse measures; As to him who stands
 On foreland prominent, and views afar
 With pointed telescope, each several path
 The gliding vessels bound to different marts
 Thro' liquid waters take: the same to thee
 Appears the churchman's route, as devious,
 Wide, and erratic, as the vent'rous barks
 That brave old Ocean's pow'r, all led by gain
 Or mad ambition to the bold emprise,
 Whether o'er Afric's fable sons to spread
 The dire alarm, and lead the captive group

3

In galling fetters, to the driver's lash :
 Or plant th' infernal policy of courts,
 The dang'rous knowledge of enlighten'd man,
 Amid pacific ocean's harmless isles.
 Descend, **Urania** clerical, descend,
 And to thy humblest suppliant impart
 Those mystic truths, which given to the tribes
 Of needy gownsmen, shall exalt my fame,
 Rescue me, hopeless, from the country cure,
 Or lead me to some envied benefice.

So, fam'd of old, in **Rome**'s yet infant days,
 * The wary king, to guide the reins of state
 With equal hand, (as fabling authors tell)
 Held nightly converse with the sapient nymph,
 Amid the holy, consecrated grove,
 And gave his useful precepts, as her own
 Drawn from the skies, and sanctioned with her name.

There are, whom fortune in capricious hour,
 From lowest stations, e'en from curacies,
 Has rais'd to ease and eminence at once.
 Thus islands rise 'mid ocean's wide domain,

* **Numa Pompilius.**

At nature's sudden fiat, whether heat
 Volcanic urges from the deep below,
 Or portions of the world of waters fail.
 So the bright sun-beam thro' the murky cloud,
 On dark November's melancholy day,
 Darts its warm radiance on the hollow side
 Of some high promontory, erst in mists
 And drear obscurity involv'd: the ray
 Dazzles with vivid light, and borne oblique
 Gilds a gay magic circle all around.
 But this, alas, the happy lot of few,
 To reach with giant-stride the envied goal,
 Untaught, untutor'd in the general track,
 Serves but to mark the giddy hand of chance
 In striking characters; fate still averse,
 Or still befriending, rules the tribe of man.

Others of family, allied to blood
 In race ennobled, which ill-brooks to own
 The poor relation, or admit the claim
 Of equal lineage, by penury made;
 Oft in the Church obtain preferment's height
 With rapid step, "and whisper whence they steal"
 The grand distinction of the bishop's see.

Oft too the shameless pimp of men in pow'r,
 By courtly prelate dubb'd a rev'rend priest,
 Tho' late a pander to his master's vice,
 And skill'd in every act of infamy,
 Dares to invade the Church's calm retreat
 And mask his vices in religion's breast.

Thus by the cunning artist's plastic hands,
 The fleece, which erst pollution's tainted hue
 Eager imbibed, and varied like the pard,
 With rank deformity's contagious spot,
 Wash'd with the chemic juice new beauty learns,
 And cloth'd in stainless sable cheats mankind.

From such no certain theories arise,
 No useful facts depend, whereon to build
 The fabric of a seat episcopal,
 Or fill the vacant stall of tott'ring dean :
 As well expect the hidden fates to know
 From comet's aspect, or the meteor's glare,
 Whose brilliant splendour serves but to surprise.

But those, whom fortune with no liberal hand
 Has blest, denied nobility of birth

High priz'd, nor rais'd above the common herd
Who crowd in black'ning shoals the Church's gate,
Whose honest parentage could scarce supply
The bare necessities of college life,
Far different arts attend; to them the Muse
Her guiding arm displays, and points at first
To cures and lectureships, the smiling dawn
Of future grandeur to the stripling clerk;
Next wings her daring flight o'er fields of glebe,
The vane-crown'd spire, and the snug retreat
Of rosy vicar in the peaceful vale:
Or haply o'er the loaded barn she strays
Of some rich pluralist, whose tythe in kind,
Augments the living's value and renown.
Nor stops her progress here: tho' worthy these
To raise the curate's admiration high,
And light ambition's fervour in his breast,
They are but prizes of inferior worth
In latt'ry clerical, where canons, deans,
Precentors, prebends, stand in bright array
To urge the youthful candidate to try
The path of fortune, for her reign extends
E'en to the Church, where merit and desert
Too often pine in hopeless indigence,

Where worth unbenefic'd in penury lives
Neglected and despis'd ; to close the list
Of rev'rend dignitaries, prelates come
In lawn atray'd, and strive as eagerly
For York or Canterbury's primate see,
As erst when curates chronicled for want,
They sought the petty vicarage for bread.

Well to a race compar'd, the Church exact
Resemblance bears, where all her sons contend
The mitred prize to win : large is the field,
Divers the tracks, and various the rewards
Of prowess clerical ; the distanc'd clerk
For highest eminence, may still attain
Some humbler lot, some less exalted meed :
He whose warm soul ambition might inflame
By hope the flatterer aided, in his youth,
To reach with priestly consequence the goal
Of height prelatic : by experience taught
The useful lesson of his wishes cross'd,
Frustate his darling hope, may calm resign
Each view exalted, and no longer raise
In sportive fancy's magnifying eye,
The fairy fabric of the mitred stall ;

But by example warn his rustic flock
 To shun the steepy precipice of hope ;
 And a good vicar, by his wholesome truths,
 Conduct them faithful to the paths of peace.

The road to wealth by college life, and modes,
 * Old honest Warton sung, and quaintly traced
 His discontented hero thro' the maze
 Of each gradation painful, till at length
 The frail incumbent vacated the gift
 His longing hopes presag'd thro' many a year :
 Enrich'd with Oxford anecdote, and tales
 Of humour interspers'd, the story runs,
 And gives this useful moral to mankind,
 Still in pursuit shall happiness consist,
 And still recede with equidistant pace.

But mine a different task : the various arts
 The gownsman must adopt to reach the goal
 Of Churchly eminence, or stop content
 With lesser dignities, my arduous theme :
 Whether to living, lectureship, or cure,

* Progress of Discontent.

Aspire his humbler hopes, or kindling zeal
 Decks the long visionary prospect, rich
 With tow'rs episcopal, to each the muse
 Her fost'ring care shall give, and still direct
 The churchman's devious path, or thro' the glare
 Of courtly splendour, or the silent walk
 Of peaceful merit in the lowly vale:
 If beat your bosoms with ambition's fears,
 Lift well, ye gownsmen, since her art is sure,
 Observe her precepts in their mazy course,
 Haply, tho' late, preferment shall repay
 Your restless cares, and bid th' assenting world
 Acknowledge perseverance must succeed.

The task begins, for seated in his cure
 From London distant but a few short miles,
 Behold the youthful candidate for fame
 Revolve each system in his thoughtful mind
 And trace each step progressive, to advance
 In general estimation. Hard his lot,
 And difficult indeed, to gain esteem
 Where rival parties claim a different strain,
 Changing and versatile: some Proteus priest,

Cameleon-like, of many-colour'd hue,
 Whose mind, like water from the neighb'ring soil
 Where'er it glides, adopts its qualities,
 Shall best succeed amid the motley group.
 Here oft combin'd, beyond the power to please,
 Are pride and ignorance, the city-twins ;
 Here dwells the knight whose consequential year
 Of shrievalty conferr'd a titled name,
 And gave his latent follies to the world ;
 Here the malign old maid, whose hideous form
 Bears small proportion to her sordid mind,
 Laden with wealth, with envy, and with spleen,
 Stalks like distemper in infectious hour,
 With jaundic'd eye o'er all the village train,
 Musing she pores, keen calumny to deal.
 So cuts the scythe with meditated stroke
 Oblique, the painted lily or the rose,
 Remorseless, as the noxious weed which falls
 Pois'nous, unpitied, headless to the ground.

So thro' the vegetable tribe, o'er "herb,
 Tree, fruit, or flow'r," creation's fair expanse,
 Toils the slow snail, and still invidious leaves

The slimy distilment, but most its care
 To blot the blooming garden's beauteous pride,
 And most obscure the plant of liveliest hue.

The wealthy cit, whose counting-house contains
 But half his consequence, relieves the load
 Of cumbrous grandeur at his rural vill :
 Great and important every afternoon,
 Soon as th' Exchange is done, the tradesman now,
 " Meek and a liar," can be found no more :
 Behold Sir Traffic, distant, grave, and wise,
 The wonderful effect of four short miles.
 These with censorious antiquated maids,
 Disbanded veterans, and a motley herd
 Of trades unnumber'd, but from town retir'd
 To taste salubrious zephyr's balmy breeze,
 And husband out life's taper in decay,
 By calm retirement from infected air,
 Compose the preacher's audience ; to a throng
 So odd combin'd, 'tis difficult to give
 Meet satisfaction, for no tastes agree
 Amid the jarring group, but discord all,
 As politicians o'er the last gazette.

Thus did the skilful painter once unite
 With humour whimsical, in one strange piece
 Things of discordant nature, meant to shew
 Mankind's queer oddities to view, an owl
 Deck'd with a lawyer's sapient wig and band
 Perch'd on a brief: here too, an ass beside,
 Whose lengthen'd ears adorn'd a soldier's hat,
 Sate the wide-grinning monkey, who display'd
 In garb medicinal the deathless pill.

Nor sense, nor reason, guide the crew grotesque,
 Of fashionable village, useless all
 The preacher's hope to please the vagrant will,
 And each endeavour to content is vain
 As his, who sought, so ancient fables tell,
 To ease the weary load mankind sustain,
 By yielding each a several pow'r to choose
 His malady appropriate, from the heap
 Of aggregated ills, which men endure:
 The burthen'd slave with galling setters clogg'd,
 Threw down the hated load, and in its place
 Assum'd arthritic gout, a change severe,
 And still remain'd as thankless as before.

Sad retrospect! in vain the curate's lore
Arrang'd in nervous diction, shall commend
His honest zeal, in vain his doctrines drawn
From purest sources of unerring truth
Shall tell the meed of worth, the woe of sin;
These they regard not, and to other arts,
Not those which reason speaks, religion gives,
For general favour must he stand indebted.
He who would gain the transitory gleam
Of approbation, 'mid th' inhabitants
Of London's vicinage, must quit the name
And surly virtue of the zealous priest,
And act the supple sycophant to all:
Oft when the busy toil of day is o'er
Must waste the watchful hours of the night
Deep in quadrille with spinsters of threescore,
Must hear with mute attention and disgust,
The tales of other times, command a laugh,
With varying muscle; counterfeit a sigh
At every period for the prating dame
Whose lapdog furnishes an anecdote,
And blends its mournful hist'ry with her own.

Still other arts assist: each Sunday morn

When surplic'd by the officious sexton's hand,
 The curate stands 'mid pompous overseers,
 Churchwardens, all the vestry's motley crew,
 O'er the fair vestment let the graduate's hood
 Be decent thrown, the scarf with glossy hue
 Rustle in silken sound, the scented band
 Breathe perfum'd odours to the distant aisle.

These have their use, or else in silence past
 Unsung remain'd, full well their worth is seen
 To raise the curate's reputation high.

In these blest days, refinement can endure
 No truth sublime, no heav'n-taught eloquence,
 Save it meanders from the well-drest priest,
 In cadence plaintive as the whisp'ring wind,
 Or balmy zephyrs breathing on the rose.

Not so of old, in meanest garb array'd
 Th' unletter'd Galileans taught mankind
 The glorious system of a world redeem'd:
 Not so of old, with inspiration fir'd,
 The grand apostle of the Gentile race,
 Travers'd th' inhospitable regions round,

Friendless, and naked, to barbarians wild
 Boldly the language of conviction spake,
 Saw undismay'd each instrument of pain,
 And seal'd his heavenly mission with his blood.

Sometimes in vain shall worth, shall sense combine
 Engaging manners, dress, attention, meet
 To gain the curate general applause :
 Or if perchance, (an instance rare indeed)
 His doctrine gain the popular esteem,
 Still shall some trifling, trivial circumstance
 Disturb his peace ; malevolence full oft
 With serpent-tooth his honest fame corrode.

Learn then this mournful truth, ye rev'rend tribe,
 Who seek applause around Augusta's walls,
 Where thick the scatter'd villages appear
 In beauteous landscape, learn this mournful truth,
 That worth and stubborn virtue are the plants
 Least suited to the soil, the monarch oak
 Which braves inclement winter's furious storms
 Thrives not in sand, be there the willow placed
 Which bends its flexible branches to the gale.

Rough as the element on which he lives,
 And scarce distinguish'd from the trower'd host
 Of hardy seamen, see the naval priest,
 Chaplain to some first-rate, who boldly seeks
 Preferment, 'mid the dangers of the deep.

Many the useful arts which must combine
 With innate qualities of various mould,
 To fend the sacred character to sea.
 Form'd to rough hardiment on Cambria's hills,
 As yet an infant, let him learn to hear
 Plinlemmon's nipping blast, unmov'd, unclad,
 Drench'd with the pitiless pelting of the storm
 Unhurt to laugh, till sinewy strength shall brace
 His well-knit frame robust; Oxonia next
 Hail him a tuffless servitor obscure;
 Here may his mind by civil insult taught,
 And mocking condescension rival soon
 The woundless texture of his outward form.
 Unknown, unnoticed by the gayer tribe
 Who tread the academic path, on whom
 He waits submissive, and who wanton oft
 Haras his soul with insolent commands,
 Soon to the ruffian gang of college cooks,

The knavish miscreants who live by theft
 And swallow down iniquity with ale,
 Vex'd he retreats, and o'er the social bowl
 Familiar relishes the jest obscene,
 Th' irreverent mirth of buttery profane.

At length her graduate hand Oxonia lays
 Mild on his cap, and leaves a tassel there,
 The badge unfeeling statutes had denied
 Till four long-ling'ring, slow-revolving years
 Had prov'd his ignominious service hard.
 Cloth'd in the sable garb, and dubb'd a priest,
 Disdaining ease ignoble, he resolves,
 Far from the humble curate's studious walk,
 The happy state of learned indolence,
 To plough the raging billows of the main
 Fearless and bold, a resolution meet
 For those who boast amid the cleric herd
 A temper'd hardiment of steely grain.
 Him nor the chilling blast which drives the storm
 Infuriate o'er the misty mountain's brow
 Of frowning Apennine, or frozen Alp
 Tremendous, can alarm: the sickly breeze
 Infectious hovering o'er the barren fands,

Or wilds unblest of desert Araby
Bootless on him shall blow, Sirocco's self
Deal no dread mischief to his sinewy frame
Tho' coasting near those pestilential shores
Whence deadly dews, unwholesome mists exhale.
Nor rest his merits here, his mind well-stor'd
With useful arts, his sense of character
Not over-nice when jests licentious start,
And set the ward-room table in a roar,
Endear him highly to the idle crew
When calms in southern latitudes prevail.
Then when amusements call to waste the hour
In games of chance, his worth conspicuous shines,
Skill'd in backgammon, and the tactic moves
Of chess, the emblematic type of war :
Well-vers'd in curious Hoyle's unfailing rules,
Positions scientific, and the host
Of endless chances on immortal whist.
Thus both by art and nature well-adorn'd,
With mind attemper'd to each shifting scene,
And blest with frame impenetrable, proof
To each attendant peril of the sea,
The long carousal, or the din of war,
The noxious climate, or the furious gale,

Still, like the native monsters of the deep,
Unhurt the chaplain lives, and well deserves
Remuneration ample for his pains.

Haply the future favours he shall share
Of some high admiral, who hail'd a peer
By nobly bleeding in his country's cause,
Shall recollect, to honourable ease
Retir'd, the merits of the naval clerk,
The boon companion of his former days.
Plac'd near his patron on the sea-girt shore,
The healthy vicar of yon rising spire,
Studiois of ease, and shelter'd from the storm
Of life's contending elements he lives,
Oft wastes the lagging moments of the night,
When cheerless winter brings th' obstreperous blast,
In social converse with his patron lord,
In cups oblivious drowns each care malign,
And, but on Sundays, hears no chiming bells.

But let not obloquy unsparing, deal
Envenom'd satire on the general tribe
Of priesthood aggregate, who occupy
Their sacred business on the trackless deep,
And sail the sea in ships: no doubt there are

Numbers among divinity marine,
 Of spotless character, and genuine worth,
 Who 'mid the world of waters well descant
 On each surrounding scene, and well instruct
 Their hardy audience in the ways of heav'n.

Oft shall the good man, when the billows high
 Hang o'er the mast tremendous, and advance
 Their foaming heads, destruction threat'ning dire,
 When gleamy lightning from the cloudy skreen
 Of hov'ring darknes, at dread intervals
 Illumes the caverns of the deep aby's,
 And death terrific rides on every wave.
 Thus shall the chaplain minister relief
 To the pale seaman " in an hour so rude,"
 And chace the terrors of the troublous main :
 " Learn, erring children, from this awful scene
 " Of jarring elements, the pow'r supreme
 " Of Heav'n's Almighty King, he who on high
 " Unwearied views the fragile sons of earth,
 " Pities their weakness, and their fear relieves ;
 " Hence then your gloomy doubts, the God whom
 " light,
 " At his dread fiat summon'd, quick obey'd,

" And flew fast flitting, o'er the shapeless mass
 " Of Chaos, at creation's early birth,
 " Can bid the fretful elements subside
 " Obedient at his word ; fear then no more,
 " For know his goodness equal to his pow'r."

Oft too, when artificial thunder breaks
 From cannon hideous, those engines dire,
 Of mischievous invention, when the roar
 Of dread artillery bellows through the deep,
 When splinters fraught with death unceasing fly,
 And carnage stalks terrific o'er the deck,
 While all is tumult, all disorder wild,
 Then may the chaplain for his work divine
 Find ample exercise : the mangled tar
 Rack'd with the pain of amputated limbs,
 Left but the relic of an human form,
 Whose pallid front the icy hand of death
 Bathes with cold dews, requires the healing balm
 Of Christian consolation to his soul.

Him, at his hammoc-side the tender priest
 Shall watch with care officious, and console
 His painful suff'ring, to his humble view

Shall ope the treasures of the world to come,
 Lift his conceptions to the bliss prepar'd
 For those who do their duty here below
 As Providence assigns, and teach the truth,
 The truth celestial, that joy attends
 Who bravely perish for their country's cause,
 Soon as the chilling pain of death is o'er.

Thus shall the good man soothe the bed of woe
 With voice harmonious, cheer the parting soul,
 And minister sweet hope, that soon shall find
 The dying sailor those blest shores where storms
 Ne'er rage tremendous, where his vessel moor'd
 Shall fear no tides impetuous, where no winds
 Destructive hurricanes shall blow, but vernal gales,
 With heaven his pilot, waft him to the port,
 The wish'd-for haven of eternal rest.

Sounds now the “drum ecclesiastic” loud,
 Summons each hopeful candidate for fame
 To London lectureship. Retreated now
 To where no cares perplex, no ills annoy,
 The aged wight, whose still-declining health,

Gave cheering hope to every watchful clerk,
Vacates at last the long-expected seat.

Now start the busy tribe in wild pursuit,
And canvass all the parish-precinct round :
Array'd in smiles, and meek humility,
Priests of all ages, tenets, and opinions,
With cap in hand solicit the support,
The vote and interest of the motley herd
Whose suffrages secure the darling prize.
Now reigns the shortliv'd consequence of man,
For each mechanic can alarm the fears
Or animate the hopes of anxious clerk.
At length in due succession each attends
To give probation-specimen of skill
In doctrine, or in pulpit eloquence.
Now comes the arduous time, the solemn hour
Which waits upon preferment : to his aid
The wary candidate in sob'rest mood
Invokes hypocrisy, his steady friend,
To shed its genial influence, and inspire
His tongue with doctrines for the varying hour.
See him amid the pulpit's gorgeous dress

Deal round damnation with a liberal hand,
 Rant, rave, and roar, and to perdition send
 Th' admiring audience, but with fleetest haste,
 Ere to their journey's end arriv'd, recalls
 Their steps by speedy messenger of grace.

So on a rope high-pois'd at country fair,
 The skilful dancer, midst his agile tricks,
 Seems headlong falling, and anon each heart
 With pitying anguish beats, aloft in air
 The nimble artist bounds, the false-made step
 Was but a feint to cheat the gaping crew
 And raise the credit of the dancer higher.

Hapless the audience whose minds endure
 Such specious doctrine, or who blindly think
 By ineffectual indolence, call'd grace,
 To merit heaven, or who, lull'd to rest
 In nice security, neglect to rear
 Those active yirtues which in lustre pure
 O'er this benighted wilderness of life
 Shine in the firmament its brightest stars.
 Yet such the doctrines which allure full oft,
 Full oft obtain the vacant lectureship,

Or city living's presentation rich,
 If taught with modern elocution's force.
 So 'mid the beauteous coverture conceal'd
 Of rip'ning berry, in its roseate hue,
 Lurks the dread nightshade; to the infant's eye
 Fair clust'ring fruit it seems, and innocent
 To taste, alas the weeping mother, late
 Bewails th' expiring victim in her arms.
 Yet such the general language of the sons
 Of erring sects, whose tenets false deride
 All human learning, and all moral worth,
 Who rest their merits on a barren faith,
 Fruitless of works which meliorate mankind.

Say, ye blind guides, ye mad declaimers say,
 Shall not man's virtues, at the solemn hour
 Of final judgment, rise in bright array,
 Plead trumpet-tongued before that awful seat,
 That dread tribunal, where enthroned sits
 Justice with mercy season'd? Why was man
 Plac'd for probation in a social world,
 And taught to love his brother as himself,
 But to display that energy of soul,
 That love compassionate, that friendship pure,

And all those virtues which ensure a life,
Beyond the narrow confines of the grave?

Observe yon supple, ever-smiling wight,
Whose simp'ring features one might almost swear
Would mock the mining energy of pain,
And in a smile expire; 'tis his to mount
Near London's tow'rs in smoky grandeur lost,
The village pulpit in the afternoon.
Surely some great transcendant merit blaz'd,
Some worth conspicuous shone, to gain the meed
Of fashionable lecture, and the palm
Of universal suffrage, from the tribe
Who catch the honey'd sentence from his lips;
Say, was it learning, was it moral worth,
Or practice guided by the sacred truths
Of found theology, which well observ'd
Shew the good tenour of his blameless life,
And gave a comment to the text he taught,
Or were domestic virtues genuine proofs
Of innate worth, that moral husbandry
Which best bespeaks the culture of the mind?

Ah no: alas, in these degenerate days,

Worth, like the aloe's blooms, but rarely seen,
Or seen at all, but once a century.

Say then the cause, for why should vice usurp
Fair virtue's seat, and sit enthron'd in state,
Or lost in revel, while the hapless fair
Wanders a vagrant hated and despis'd?

Learn then the simple tale of his success:
That smiling sycophant, that saintly priest
Built his preferment on a surer rock
Than merit boasts, or virtue can command,
In times when pretexts plausible avail.
Small sense he had, but yet enough to know
That half mankind are well content to see
The shadow for the substance, thus he dealt
The world's own coinage to their hands, and play'd
A motley character, for meanness gave
The semblance of humility; her mask
Fresh dipp'd in flatt'ry's many-colour'd hues
Hypocrisy assumed, reflected back
Each image, grateful, with new beauty drest
In loveliest garb: self-interest too,
Which never slumbers, and illusive art
With matchless impudence confederate came.

Thus arm'd, submissive to each voter's nod,
 With ready condescension, lowly phrase,
 The cassock'd lacquey smil'd, and all to all
 Became as varying matters might require,
 His interest still the basis of the change.

Soon on its center pois'd, uplifted high,
 The sport of shifting winds, as furious blasts
 Or vernal zephyrs blow, the flexible vane
 Takes each direction at its pliant will,
 Best emblem of the rev'rend changeling's mind.

But soft ye now, for lo the prayers are o'er,
 And to the pulpit with slow pace proceeds
 The coxcomb clerical; no straggling hair
 Mars the fair oval of his angel face,
 No sloven gait disturbs the floating folds
 Of filken robes which rustle as he walks,
 Graceful his passage up the winding stairs
 Which shew the satin garb, the filken hose,
 While beams the spangled buckle's gorgeous glare
 And darts its silver radiance all around.
 Now with uplifted eyes to that mild God,
 Who knows the hidden ~~secrets~~ of the heart,

Fervent he prays, to shew the diamond ring
 Which sparkling glitters on his lily hand.
 Then from his knees with modish air erect
 He rises, and with voice harmonious names
 The subject of the subsequent harangue,
 Made to delight, but not instruct his flock,
 Too haughty they to learn, to dictate he
 Much too well-bred, or call them sinful men.
 On he proceeds throughout the mild discourse,
 No knotty point of doctrine to explain,
 Or teach religion as the system pure
 Whence moral worth with sanction'd ardour flows :
 These to the pastors of an homelier tribe,
 The teachers orthodox of humble swains,
 Lost in the solitude of country cures,
 Content he leaves, with literary lore ;
 His the grand object, by the plausible tale
 Of modern eloquence, and accent pure
 Of chastest language, to secure his fees,
 His evening parties, and what best promotes
 His temporal interest in the present world.

Who, 'mid the Church's genuine sons sincere,
 Have trod with science deep, and learn'd research

The studious cloyster, o'er the midnight lamp
 Have hung inquisitive, and earliest years,
 Intemperate pleasure's season, still devote
 Have given to labours doctrinal, and read
 With ceaseless zeal the mystic volume oft,
 Toil'd thro' deep controversy's page, and reach'd
 By regular degrees their sacred post,
 Their holy function, and their pastoral care.
 These must lament when observation calls
 With constant voice to mark the numerous tribes
 Unfit, who throng the vineyard of the Church,
 Like Egypt's locusts, and the hallow'd haunt
 Profane, as Satan did the blissful bow'r
 Where sate sweet innocence untempted yet,
 Unconscious of its fall, when resolute
 At once the shady mound of Paradise
 With eye malign, and sole unblest he leap'd.

How oft shall learned penury from the cure,
 View the Cathedral's lofty tow'rs, and sigh
 That servile ignorance should there usurp
 Her constant seat, that adulation base,
 With sleekest indolence should oft pervade
 The sable brotherhood elect, who pace

The hallow'd dome, and dignified obtain
 By fickle fortune, or by slavish arts,
 The pious revenues which elder time
 Ordain'd for merit and for worth alone ?

Look thro' the mitred provinces, and see,
 Of those who blest with opulence enjoy
 The snug advowson, or perpetual cure,
 How few by regular progression come,
 Or early destination, to the Church.
 Peruse the chapter of their earlier days,
 Turn o'er the page which tells their first pursuits,
 And read the curious medley it describes.

Some in laced military garb array'd,
 With blasphemy genteel, and modish vice
 Seeking thro' blood-stain'd fields of war, renown ;
 Others to peaceful arts of trade incline
 With whisp'ring humbleness, and knavery meek,
 But thwarted all their darling hopes, and lost
 Each eager expectation to arise
 To eminence distinguish'd, in the walks
 Their early passions chose to tread, content
 They seek the functions of the Church recluse ;

Oft too the noisy sons of strife, when tired
 Of law's meand'ring, wild, uncertain course,
 With all the factious jargon of the bench,
 Turn to the Church's hallow'd haunt, with joy
 Enter her silent, sacred realms, forget
 Their ancient feuds, and like the straggling sheep
 Lost thro' the day the tangled woods among,
 Or stray'd the steepy precipice's height,
 When calls the shepherd's evening pipe, collect
 Their scatter'd footsteps, down the mountain's side
 Wind in slow peaceful journey to the fold.

Hence from the mixtures various and grotesque
 Of those who vers'd in divers arts before
 Still failing, late beneath the banner list,
 And crowd the ranks of the Church militant.
 Arise those tropes and figures in discourse,
 Which oft the list'ning auditor surprise,
 And force him, heedless of the sacred place,
 To stifle laughter in convulsive cough.

Dres's'd in the sacred robe the soldier priest
 Not yet awak'd from early dreams of war,
 Havoc and carnage on th' enfanguin'd plain,

Instructs his flock in military phrase,
 Fights the good fight ; and finishes his course.
 Rang'd in platoons, he bids th' admiring crew
 Fire their light musquetry at moral vice,
 While by the bastion of good works secure
 Their dread artillery on the tempter plays,
 Who ranging still seeks whom he may devour.

In declamation's wordy torrent pours,
 And puzzling argument, the lawyer's plea,
 Who to the Church admitted, from the courts
 Brings litigation's language, and obscures
 Those sacred truths which erst the humble tribe,
 Th' illiterate fishermen of Galilee,
 Simple as heav'n's high Majesty ordain'd,
 Promulg'd in accents unadorn'd and plain.

The sober trader, now a man of God,
 Crowds his discourse with metaphor exact
 Of loss and profit, or the great returns
 Of gain prolific to the wiser throng,
 Who well forsake the traffic of the world
 For heav'nly merchandize, and lasting joys ;
 And should his lecture be the genuine work

His plodding brain compos'd, the fancy rich
 Of trade-fraught intellect, his flock may learn
 The nett proceeds of a religious life,
 The task delightful and the wary modes
 Of speculation in the world to come.
 Or haply not forgetful of the arts
 Of trade and dealing which his youth imbib'd,
 Cheaply he purchases the rev'rend store
 Of sacred manuscript, by priest defunct,
 Now public destin'd to the highest voice,
 And doom'd to serve successive ages still,
 Pale, like the moon with borrow'd light he shines,
 And darkling shews the pilgrim on his way.

Yonder in lawn behold the rev'rend man
 Slow moving thro' the gothic pile to pray,
 Near to the utmost grandeur of the Church
 Advanc'd, nor wanting but one higher step
 To prove the value of his rich deserts;
 The sacred champion of a titled crew
 Political, whose ready language flows
 Spontaneous and persuasive, to defend
 The varying measures of the group profane,
 To which he owes his envied dignity.

The supple virgins deck'd with mitred staves
 Attend obsequious, from his outward port,
 And saint-like manners, one would surely deem
 Him a disciple of that Saviour meek
 Who said, " My kingdom is not of this world."
 Vice and ambition, enemies to peace,
 Seem quite subdued, and in his placid eye
 Calm resignation lights her holy flame,
 While virtue and religion, hand in hand,
 Like the twin-cherubs on a monument,
 Around him hover, as a faint on earth.
 False, false conclusion, be the veil withdrawn
 That hides the cover'd heart, the deep disguise
 The bosom wears, pull'd off, in vain is found
 His fix'd attention rivetted on God.

Learn that an higher stall, a goodlier see,
 Employ his pensive thoughts, this morning's post
 Proclaim'd an archiepiscopal demise.
 Hence then to court: what tho' his ample see
 Yields a rich revenue beyond his wants,
 Or utmost wishes, yet the fever heat
 Of high ambition burns within his breast,
 And prompts the measures which his heart condemns.

See him careſſ the courtly tribe, and ſmile,
 Or bow, ſubmiſſive to a ſervile throng
 All like himſelf in keen purſuit engag'd
 Of ſome much envided, periſhable poſt.
 Sad, ſad relexion, melancholy thought,
 That thoſe ordain'd to discipline the world,
 And train them cauſious in the paths of heav'n,
 Neglectful ſhould forget how better far
 To tread the venerable courts of God,
 Than pompoſus paſcaces of earthly kings;
 Better his cauſe eternal to upholt
 With ready eloquence, and ſtudious aim,
 Than join the noify faction of a clan,
 The mercenary ſlaves of party zeal,

The task ſublime, to vindicate the ways
 Of heav'n's high maſteſty with mortal men,
 His genuine word ſincere, and truth diſiine,
 Llandaff* affum'd: and ſoon the ſpecious guife
 Which modern, ſceptic, atheiſts, induce
 To darken God's ſupremacy, and veil
 The noontide beam of reuelation's light,

* Apology for the Bible.

Calm he withdrew, disproving reason's claim,
Her bounded nature, and her vain pretence.

Long had the faithless, mad, obstreperous crew
With clamour loud and mischievous intent,
With effrontery shameful, bold advanc'd,
And dared attack with base unhallow'd tongue
The bulwark of the Christian's hope supreme ;
No longer working covertly (as men
Who seek some noted citadel's o'erthrew
By mining patient in the darksome womb
Of earth, and dire combustibles convey
Amid the treacherous caverns, to upheave
With dread explosion, and with ruin dire,
The mighty mass with all its warlike sons),
With open violence, in face of day,
By specious reason aided, they assail
The mystic volume of the book of God,
Scan each transaction by th' imperfect rule
Of human knowledge, and self-will'd reject
With impious sophistry the voice of heav'n.
So did the erring tribe of Israel's sons,
Abandon'd by Jehovah to the rule
Of unassisted reason, soon forget

The hand that made them, and near H̄oreb's mount
 Reduce th' Almighty's image to the form
 Of senseless animals, inane ; uprear'd
 With brutish lineaments a golden calf
 Prostrate to worship, and to represent
 Whom not the boundless regions of the earth,
 Or ocean's wilderness of waters wild,
 Or worlds in regular confusion lost
 'Mid the void, vacant realms of space, nor all
 The measureless abodes of heav'n contain.

Arm'd for the fight, the pious prelate came
 In all the Christian panoply divine ;
 None better knew th' Almighty mind supreme,
 Or man's conceptions limited, and weak
 His boasted reason's unavailing force ;
 Patient he traced the perfect ways of God,
 Tho' shrouded oft with mystery, and dark
 To human knowledge ; in the sacred book
 Each fancied imperfection reason drew
 Presumptuous, ably he sustained, and prov'd
 Its genuine value, and its matchless truth :
 Soon, by resistless argument, mankind
 Were taught to venerate the sacred source

Of all their comfort, present or remote :
Soon did the Christian hero, fam'd Llandaff,
Break the weak barrier of the sceptic's art
With plain, perspicuous eloquence, and tone
Impressive of its truth, disperse the clouds
And gathering darkness which false reason's sons,
Vain, atheistical, induc'd, and blindly spread
O'er the pure volume of eternal truth.
So 'mid the mouldering pile of some old fane,
Lost in the gothic aisle's obscure recess,
Th' invidious spider o'er the hallow'd shrine
His filmy texture draws, dares to profane
The rich wrought grandeur of the finish'd tomb,
Where sleep the ashes of the rev'rend priest
Sainted when elder superstition wrapp'd
The world unletter'd in her murky gloom;
Him, at his work malign, the studious eye
Of some deep antiquarian haply kens,
Amid the learned labours of research
In times remote, and with a touch oblique
Defeats the reptile's dark, malicious aim,
To hide the gothic tracery's rich design,
And mar the sculptor's kind, industrious care.
Skill'd in antiquity's rare, genuine lore,

Soon from its dust unhallow'd he retrieves
 The precious fragment, from its state obscure
 Rescues its beauties, for long centuries lost,
 And bids the world its venerable taste,
 Its elegance unrivall'd still revere.

Thus did Llandaff when sophistry profane,
 With empty reason aided, bold attack'd
 The mystic volume, and would fain release
 Mankind from all the duties it enjoins;
 Soon he repell'd the mischievous design
 By steady argument, and learned proof,
 Straight impious darkness fled amain, and light,
 Obedient to the holy prelate's call,
 Shed its pure lustre on the Christian's hope,
 His only bulwark, and his best defence.

Him, for his pious task perform'd, attend
 Those cheering images which fancy brings
 As oft reflective on his glorious work
 Musing he meditates, unmindful he,
 Though worlds applauding greet the blest design,
 And hail him pastor of his flock indeed;
 Nor wants he mortal meed though thousands praise

Or grateful flows the tributary verse,
 Rich in, best treasure, an approving heart.
 Him shall the guardian angel, conscience, cheer
 In life's last moments, when his journey's end
 Not far remov'd arrives, his fainting frame
 Uphold with sweetest hope, the gloomy king
 Of terrors wear no dread appalling looks,
 And when releas'd from tenement of clay
 And earthy bondage, shall his spirit hear
 'Mid the throng'd host of heav'n, in accents bland
 Th' applauding mandate of th' Eternal King,
 " Servant of God, well done, well hast thou fought
 " The better fight, who nobly hast maintain'd
 " Against revolted multitudes the cause
 " Of truth; partake the joys prepar'd for those
 " Who teach my ways with energy on earth,
 " And faithful enter to the realms of blifs."

Learn hence, ye holy prelates of the Church,
 The meed attendant, which unfailing waits
 Your pastoral care perform'd: like Watson guard
 The sacred treasures to mankind reveal'd,
 Watch with unceasing vigilance your folds,
 For doctrines fashion'd by the arts of man,

Not by th' Almighty, daily gain applause,
 And seek an entrance to your holy haunts,
 'Mid these bad times of discipline relax'd ;
 Keep, as good pastors, o'er the straggling flock
 A watchful eye, least haply they seduc'd
 By arts unsanction'd in the Christian code,
 Wander deluded, and to wolves profane
 In clothing innocent become a prey.

Much it behoves the man of God to dress
 With nicest care, whether the sabbath calls
 To deck his sacred person in a gown,
 And grave canonicals : or humbler days
 Exempt him from the duties of the Church
 And pious task. The erring world decide
 Internal excellence from outward form,
 And give intrinsic merit to the garb
 Which masks deformity in beauteous shape.
 Hence must the gownsman with punctilious care
 Observe each article of dress, nor lose
 What best displays the person's easy grace,
 Or gives official consequence to men.

Full many a preacher popular, who counts

Unnumber'd thousands rang'd beneath, and throng'd
 Each crowded avenue with patient stand,
 In stupid gaze of admiration lost,
 Owes his importance to his heavenly wig,
 His graceful attitude, or handsome looks.
 Oft has the sleeve of lawn, and quadrate cap,
 The robe pontifical, and gorgeous dress,
 Bestow'd unbounded influence to words
 Inipid, void of energetic zeal,
 Which had they fall'n from common priests in crape,
 Had mov'd the fickle congregation's scorn.

That much depends upon extrinsic pow'r
 In every varying shape of character,
 'Tis needless to remark, and if denied
 All share of beauty to the gownsmen's lot,
 Let him amend capricious nature's doom,
 By every art and fashionable mode.
 So the mausoleum rears its form sublime
 With sculptur'd eleganee, and rich display
 Of outward grandeur, while within consume
 The putrid relics of an human frame
 Alike offensive to the sight and sense. •

Oft on the curate spruce the fickle fair,
 Fearful of future conquests, and in haste,
 Has cast an amorous eye, and longing wish,
 Hating th' opprobrious title of old maid:
 Well paid his personal care, and wary arts,
 By wedlock fortunate, the generous act
 Rais'd him exalted to the ease of wealth
 And all the envied greatness of renown.
 Tho' such thy fortune be not, yet observe
 All can augment the person's native grace,
 Hide its defects, a winning air display,
 And spread a lure which often shall succeed.

Crowds from the barren heights of Cambrian hills,
 Or northern Caledonia's bleak domain,
 Wind their slow way by poverty depress'd,
 And seek an entrance to the Church's haunts.
 With studious patience, and the previous steps
 Of learning classical, afforded ill
 By parents anxious for the darling son,
 Whose heart beats high for clerical renown,
 The gownfman's path is trod; at length ordain'd,
 The pale he enters of the hallow'd bound
 With hope elated, and the country cure

Deems the fond prelude to prelatic height.
 Ah wretch unthinking, to paternal love
 The hapless victim, or the mournful prey
 Of weak ambition, like the balmy gale
 Which blows delusive o'er the placid deep
 And tempts th' incautious wanderer to its breast,
 Till gain'd th' impetuous current's heady sway,
 Then wrecks th' unwary mariner, who late
 Expiring 'mid the fathomless abyss,
 Bewails his idle confidence in vain,

Ah fond delusion! better far been taught
 Some useful handicraft, some needful art
 Or profitable labour, to supply
 The various wants of civiliz'd mankind,
 Which food and clothing to yon beauteous tribe
 Of prattling infancy in rags, had giv'n,
 Than led by visionary schemes astray,
 'Mid hope's wide wilderness in early youth,
 Grasp'd at the gownsman's hard uncertain lot
 His course erratic, and precarious meed.
 Oft on the sabbath, when with tedious ride
 Four distant churches his attendance call,
 Shall sober reason, by experience taught,

Ambition's fyren voice, fallacious charms,
 Raise a drear conflict in the good man's mind.
 Perchance impel him to the humble wish,
 That to mechanic or laborious arts,
 Mercantile traffic, or industrious trade,
 His early application had been form'd.

How oft when cares domestic shall suggest
 The future misery of the childish group,
 Now lost in gambol round the social fire,
 While cradled innocence unconscious sleeps,
 Will sad sensations rend the curate's heart?
 When fancy o'er the chequer'd scenes of life
 Stretches a painful view, where clouds deform
 The opening landscape, and no sunny ray
 Seems to direct its influence on the flow'r,
 Or shield its infant beauties from the storm.
 Still shall the whisperer hope, in accents bland
 Soothe the rough presage, and in colours gay
 Deck the fond perspective, and still present
 To fond affection's keen, paternal eye
 Those many instances where genuine worth,
 Or heav'n-born genius on her wing sublime

Rose like the meteor from surrounding gloom,
And marked in sun-bright lustre its career.

Haply the curate's progeny may rise
To mitred eminence, for fortune oft,
Sportive as light on ocean's smooth expanse,
Darts her warm influence on the rustic thatch,
And bids the cottager's unlustrous child,
High on life's busy theatre sustain
Exalted characters, and deeply skill'd
Like Wolsey, or like Sixtus awe mankind :
Oft has the bare-foot Caledonian left
His dreary mountains bleak, impervious height,
And cheer'd with eager hope, and fairy tales
Of southern elegance, and placid ease,
Brav'd all the perils of his native clime.
The flinty passage, and the rugged tread
Of desert plains unblest, where verdure ne'er
Throws her green mantle o'er the barren wild,
The dang'rous whirlpool, and th' impetuous stream,
Which parts the island from its parent shore,
'Mid western Hebrides unsocial glooms,
Each rude, obstructing, interposing ill,
Hardy the Scotchman braves and still proceeds,

Stern and undaunted, to the promis'd land,
 Ne'er looking back, or casting one fond glance
 Tow'rds the dear circle of his youthful hours.

Ah how unlike the poor Italian clown,
 Forc'd by conflicting potentates to war,
 And join confederate bands in hostile arms,
 Who as he passes o'er the utmost bound,
 Whence last is seen his rustic chimney's height,
 Turns with sad, sorrowing pause; and tearful sighs
 When meeting hills the well-known haunt exclude.

Soon as Tweed's southern side the hero gains,
 Calm he expatiates on his destin'd route
 To ease and grandeur, and the Church's haunt
 Now charms th' adventurer, who with patient step,
 And meek submission, traverses the paths
 Which gradual lead to eminence; at last
 By flatt'ry's servile tongue, and lowly phrase,
 Meanness vernacular, proverbial arts
 Of northern humbleness, and watchful guard
 Of strict economy, which still becomes
 The Scottish character's generic tribe,
 He gains the prize, which fairy visions oft

Held to his eyes, when wrapp'd in balmy sleep,
 Sound he repos'd beneath inclement skies,
 With scarce a rag to shield him from the storm.

Chang'd by the changing scenery of his fate,
 From chilling poverty's cold arms releas'd,
 And warm'd with genial grandeur's sunny beam,
 Soon, like the foster'd serpent, which repay'd
 Its renovated strength with wanton bite
 On his own, tender benefactor's child,
 He deals his venom, and with interest gives
 Back to the world those meditated scoffs,
 Insult and mockery, which in former times
 His unassuming patience had endured.

Thus is the Church's holy haunt profan'd
 By those who, studious but of temp'ral gain,
 Her sacred walk, her calm recess invade,
 Mindless of all the duties she enjoins,
 To God, or man; nor other arts they seek
 But those which minister to sensual life,
 Its transient pleasures, and delusive joys.
 Such wretched hirelings but exact their dues,
 And make their proper work a sinecure:

Heedless of cares official, they but shear
 Their flock ill-fated, and but scanty food
 To the wide-straggling, wand'ring sheep supply ;
 They ne'er instruct the rude illiterate tribe,
 Who like the perishable brutes exist
 In native ignorance, each want unknown
 Save but to satiate appetite's return :
 Never attempt their fold's unpolish'd sense
 To raise, or lift their limited ideas
 From nature's visage up to nature's God.

Oft will the faithful shepherd of his flock,
 Nursing the growing intellect, inform
 His rustic scholar in the ways of heav'n ;
 Oft thro' the verdant path of nature lead,
 With kindest industry, the ductile stream
 Of knowledge, springing from the gloomy cave
 Of darkest ignorance; point the fair expanse
 Fill'd by God's hand creative, with the stores
 Of human pleasures, objects ever new,
 Fresh with delight, throughout the green domain,
 All whisp'ring praise, and all subservient still
 To man, the noble potentate of all.
 Nor will the pastor's zealous care subside

With tale of nature's wondrous works sublime,
As oft his list'ning auditor demands
With eye inquisitive, a farther view
Thro' the clear optic of religion's glass ;
Soon his untutor'd profelyte shall learn,
Tho' nature's operations loudly speak
Th' Almighty architect, whose parent hand
Clothes with such matchless skill the vast terrene,
And deals his blessings here with lib'ral hand,
Yet works of higher eminence declare
His ceaseless zeal for man's defective race,
His watchful labours, and paternal care.
Soon shall the Christian revelation burst
With noon-tide splendour on the convert's mind,
Shed its pure lustre o'er the gloomy doubts,
Which erst, like undigested chaos, warr'd
In conflict harsh, and elemental strife,
And brew'd disturbance in the human mind ;
Taught by th' angelic system, o'er the scenes
Of chequer'd life, the mournful or the gay,
He looks with calm serenity, resign'd,
Alike for sorrow, or for joy prepar'd,
As heaven's high mandate wills, contented he
To run with patience his appointed race,

Or o'er the rugged wild, or level plain,
 Till death shall summon to the realms of bliss,
 And joys unfading crown the Christian's course.

Such the best exercise of pastoral care,
 Th' appropriate busines of the man of God,
 Hourly to teach with plain perspicuous force
 The Christian institutes of love divine,
 And kind affection to the fellow tribes
 Of pilgrims journeying o'er the paths of life,
 Daily to wake with warm energetic zeal,
 The flumb'ring embers into active blaze,
 And nurse with care the intellectual flame.
 Till rear'd beyond the quenching damps which rise
 From worldly interest, and from sensual life,
 Bright thro' the ambient ether it aspires
 With grateful odour to the throne of heav'n.

Hard by the confines of yon hanging wood,
 Which casts its lengthen'd shadow o'er the vale,
 Bord'ring the silent stream, the calm retreat
 A rustic village holds, the modest Church
 Near to its patron's mansion, lifts its tow'rs
 Cloth'd with the ivy's venerable green.

Close to the gothic fabric's sacred pile,
 'Mid shading elms the vicar's neat abode
 Looks o'er the landscape down the southern slope,
 Where hill, dale, wood, and sunny plain combine
 To grace the picture with incessant charms.
 The spacious stabling tell the sportsman plain,
 Hounds, pointers, terriers, on the turf recline,
 While hunters graze, or sportive o'er the mead
 Chase in swift circle, and impetuous bound.

Newmarket graduate he, whose boyish days
 Pass'd with his sporting patron in the field,
 Scarce gave to learning the poor pittance, meet,
 Which college statutes and the Church require.
 Hunting the bus'nes of his life, no charms
 Save of the chase can captivate his breast:
 None better knows the foaming horse to guide
 O'er the wide champain, or entangled heath,
 When sounds the bugle thro' the lonely glade,
 And echo, minstrel on the mountain top,
 Reverberates the noise; when Reynard darts
 Swift from the cover; and with wary sense,
 And tongue expressive of its innate joy,
 The hound, sagacious, all his mazy track

Unravels: nothing stops the vicar's course;
 Nor bars, nor hedges, nor impetuous stream
 Of rapid river, each obstruction harsh
 Yields to his enterprising heat, as snow
 Melts at the noon-tide influence of the sun.

Then when the day declines, and homeward turn
 The mighty Nimrods with the darling spoils,
 Tir'd with the chase, and studious of repast,
 Of dissipated strength the glad recruit,
 Cheerful around the social board they sit,
 And drown in wine the labours of the day;
 Close by his patron shall the vicar quaff
 The cup oblivious, and with glee relate
 Each hunting annal of their earlier days,
 As oft releas'd from discipline of schools
 And college musty statutes, o'er the plain
 Eager they gallop'd to the jocund horn,
 And won the hard-earn'd honours of the field.

Oft too when Autumn's morning race begins,
 O'er the mown stubble with destructive tube,
 And dog attendant, shall the vicar tread
 Oft the decaying copse, or lonely wood,

When falls the foliage at the wint'ry storm,
 Shall call his footsteps thro' the tangled maze,
 To flush the stranger woodcock, or to spring
 The painted pheasant with his varying plumes,
 And stop with leaden death their wing'd career.

Such the sole qualities which can endear
 The rev'rend Churchman to the sporting Squire,
 Who thinks his patronage but ill bestow'd
 Save when by sportsman clerical enjoy'd
 Of mind and habits genial with his own.
 Nor are these qualities disgraceful, bad,
 Or ill-according with the sacred garb,
 When meant as relaxation, or to ease
 The lab'ring mind with painful study spent,
 Or deep absorption in the learned tome ;
 Oft they conduce to rosy health, recruit
 The wasted treasures of the human sense,
 Kindle the intellectual flame anew,
 And no dishonourable blame impute
 To sacred characters, if still perform'd
 With steady zeal, remains the past'ral care.
 Better pursue the pleasures of the chace,
 The bloodless triumph o'er the timid hare,

Better the whirring partridge to destroy
 With aim unerring, conquests which amuse,
 But not contaminate the gownsman's heart,
 Than hunt a levee for a vacant stall,
 With base, compliant humbleness of tone,
 And bending gesture, to a wretch who, rais'd
 By flat'ry's servile arts, or varying gale
 Of short-liv'd popularity, bestows
 The valued living as caprice inspires.

Vers'd in the trick of courts, the wary dean,
 Once the mild tutor of a premier's youth,
 Bows mid the splendid circle, when the news
 Of dying prelate meets his greedy ears,
 And beats his heart impatient for a fee.
 He, when the college hail'd the noble boy,
 Ne'er to his youthful turbulence apply'd
 Stern the correcting hand, or harsh enforc'd
 The steady discipline which humbler tribes
 Of students academic must obey;
 Each wild intemperate sally ne'er restrain'd
 By literary task : he well foresaw
 His pupil's future eminence in life,
 Extensive patronage ; the learned pate

Duck'd to the golden fool, and now demands
 The meed, attendant on his service past
 For care neglected, and for follies gloss'd
 As heedless indiscretions, youthful heat.

Him for his talents in the turbid walk
 Of speech political, and crafty arts
 In paper war, of ambush and disguise,
 Soon shall the tott'ring minister exalt
 To mitred eminence, and Church renown :
 Place on preferment's pinnacle, and teach
 That who to favours of a court aspires,
 Must catch the new-blown bubbles of the day,
 With doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour.

But say, does modest worth, unknown, unseen,
 Nowhere exalt her head ? Sure in some lone,
 Sequester'd spot, amid surrounding wilds
 The gentle fugitive is found : Ah mournful truth,
 That far remote, and difficult to find,
 Retires fair Virtue to her lone abode !

In some deep vale perchance, where mortal eye
 Ne'er look'd for human haunt, obscur'd by woods,
 Or wash'd by silent, solitary stream,

Some calm retreat, where deep the bosom'd spire
 With glittering shingles deck'd, 'mid tufted trees
 Exalts its little eminence to heaven,
 Resides the saint-like minister, whose breast,
 Taught in the school of penury to bear,
 Meek and resign'd, nor lift the murmuring voice,
 Expands in genial tenderness to all.
 His the mild charities of friendship, love,
 Those active virtues which unite the bands
 Of human fellowship, too oft dissolv'd
 By jarring interest, or deadly hate.
 He knows no enemy, no foe, but vice,
 A general foe to all, whose wily snare,
 Shap'd and adapted to each varying taste,
 First lures its votary, and then betrays.

Him, nor the covert pestilence that walks
 In gloomy darkness, nor the sickness pale
 Which strikes its victim in the blaze of noon,
 Destructive, can alarm; tho' death's fell shafts
 Wound in a thousand hideous shapes, and slay
 Unnumber'd multitudes, not less he keeps
 The constant tenor of his useful life,
 Full well prepar'd to meet his father God,

Soon as the solemn summons shall arrive ;
 And when the hour of dissolution, nigh
 By sudden sickness brought, appears in view,
 Calm and resign'd he'll wait the stroke of death,
 Kiss the stern mandate, and depart in peace.

Observe his manners in yon hallow'd spot,
 Yon modest edifice : no subtle guile,
 No deep-fraught scheme to stagger, or impose,
 Or win the fallible applause of men,
 Inflame his honest breast, that earnest look,
 That fervent zeal, is incense of the heart,
 By him best yielded, by God best receiv'd.

See how around in mute attention lost,
 His rustic flock the wholesome truths admire,
 The placid system which his doctrines teach,
 No wanton levity, no whisp'ring there
 Disturb his utterance, full well they know,
 And " feel how awful goodness is, and see
 Virtue in her shape how lovely," still confess
 His high authority, since well accords
 His daily practice with the Sunday's text.

Nor end his labours here: oft in the cot
Where pale disease, and penury combine
To make the hour of dissolution hard,
Sad in itself, more dreadful when array'd
In misery's sorrowing garb: patient he sits
To cheer the fleeting soul, and bid the tide
Of ebbing life in peaceful current part;
Meanwhile his liberal hand unwearied gives
Those cheering succours which the languid sense
Perchance may covet on the bed of death:
The healing balm of consolation pours
O'er his sick brother's mind, and still supplies
The numerous wants of body and of mind.

So as he journey'd o'er the sultry plain,
The good Samaritan, and prostrate saw,
Wounded and robb'd, a stranger in the dust,
Half dead, compassion o'er his bosom stole
And drove the paltry difference of sect
Far from his pitying breast: his wounds
Bath'd with the olive's balmy juice, he laves,
Pours in the grateful and enlivening wine,
Sets him, thus rescued from impending death,

On his own beast, and then most kindly makes
A fit provision for the life he saved.

Such the sole busines of the man of God,
Whether ennobl'd with the mitred cap,
Or mid the lowest orders of the Church,
Daily to succour whom sharp sorrow wounds,
Sickness, or pining want, to minister
Like God's own steward to all the needy tribe
Who throng life's crowded walk, and hourly teach
To shew that mercy to the suffering soul
Which God hath shewn to us; no passing wretch,
No fainting vagrant, that with piteous tone
Solicits charity, but is ordain'd
To call the latent spark of mercy forth
And warm compassion in the human heart,
Best emblem of Almighty love divine.

Learn then, ye saintly priests, ye Levites, learn,
When misery summons, to obey the call,
Nor pass regardless on the other side;
Think not religion in the formal rite,
The floating vesture, or exact discharge
Of idle ceremonies, rests; far other arts

Her active spirit loves, enthron'd on high
She sits inspective on the sons of Earth,
Prompt to declare with energetic zeal,
And ceaseless ardour, the celestial truth,
That heaven's high meed, and everlasting life,
With all the pleasures of Jehovah's love,
Are still reserv'd for those who truly shew
Duty to God, and charity to man.



THE END.

